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Ruda, Frank

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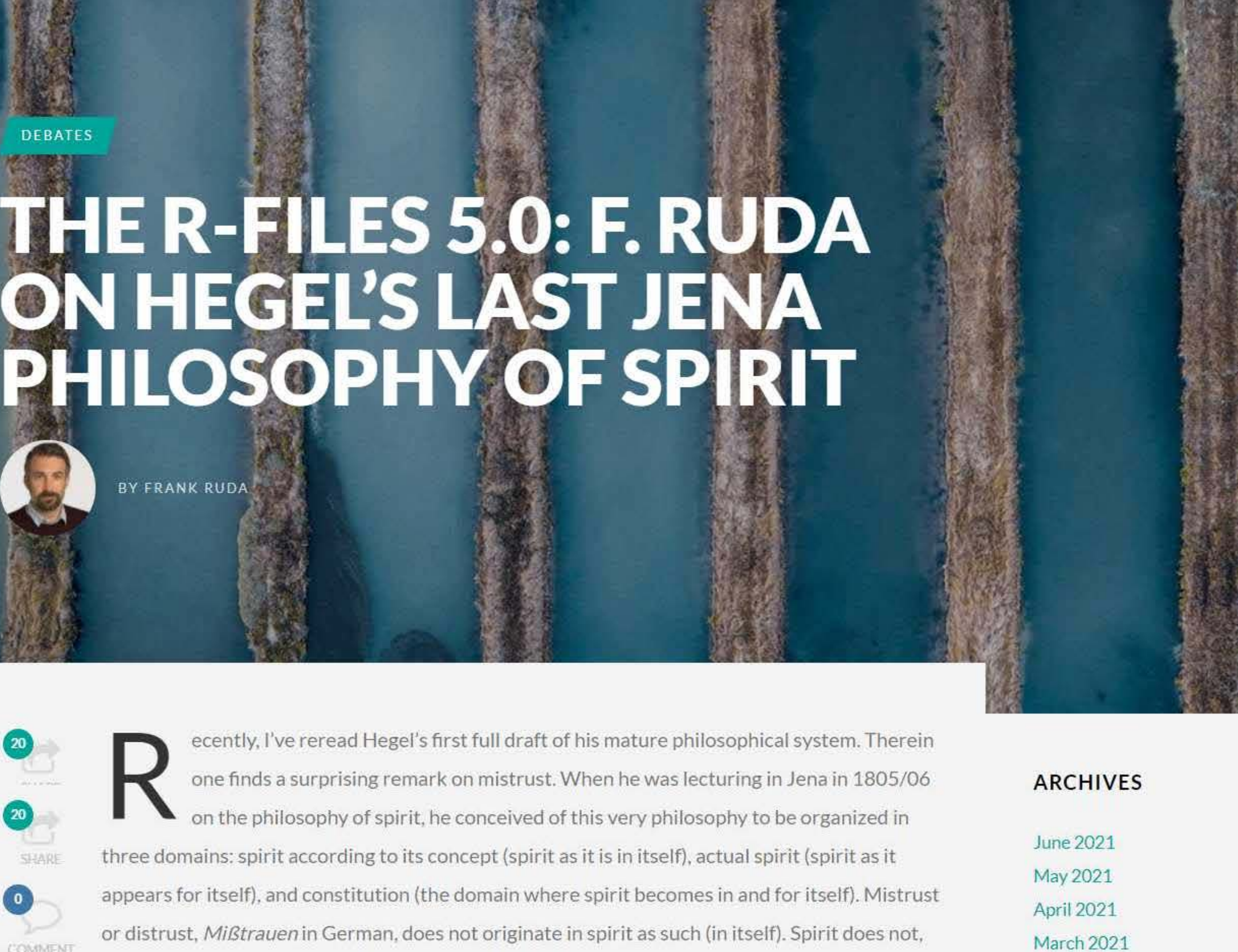
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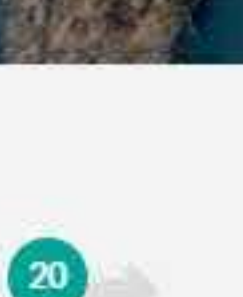
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DEBATES

THE R-FILES 5.0: F. RUDA ON HEGEL’S LAST JENA PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT



BY FRANK RUDA

20

SHARE

0

COMMENT

19

LOVE

Recently, I've reread Hegel's first full draft of his mature philosophical system. Therein one finds a surprising remark on mistrust: When he was lecturing in Jena in 1805/06 on the philosophy of spirit, he conceived of this very philosophy to be organized in three domains: spirit according to its concept (spirit as it is in itself), actual spirit (spirit as it appears for itself), and constitution (the domain where spirit becomes in and for itself). Mistrust or distrust, *Mißtrauen* in German, does not originate in spirit as such (in itself). Spirit does not, as such, have trust issues. Nor does it occur in actual spirit, but only in the "self-ordering spirit,"[i] that is, in and with the overall structure that spirit gives itself objectively. Distrust arises when spirit makes itself objective and divides itself into different spheres of activity that provide the overall forms of an economic order.

Trust issues thus originate at a certain stage of the division of labor and society. This division manifests as what Hegel calls in Jena (and later in his *Philosophy of Right*) the estates [*Stände*]. Spirit organizes its own objective standing by dividing labor, because to stand properly it needs more than one foot(ing). Each estate [*Stand*] is specified through "a particular task" and "a particular concept."[ii] The two can concur, stand in opposition to one another, and the task, through which they are specified, can even be to separate constantly from its concept.

At this point, Hegel describes these three relations in the following way: "The first element is trust, the second is the division of trust in the abstraction of right; the third is the absolute mistrust – i.e. when what counts as absolute are things, money, representatives of things."[iii] Trust is the immediate coincidence of a task or practice with its concept. Then, as Hegel argues, the concept of right, because it must necessarily be abstract to do what it is supposed to do, namely cover a broad variety of cases, introduces a division into the naturally trusting unity of practice and its concept. Ultimately, when practice and concept are fully separated from one another, when the concept is as much as the practice one of separation and division, there is mistrust, or even absolute distrust.

Mistrust is organized and practiced differently. To grasp this claim more adequately, it is crucial to note that Hegel correlates the different stages of (1) immediate trust, (2) reflected trust, or division in unity, and (3) distrust as organized division with what he calls the three lower estates. The higher estate, the "universal class"[iv] is involved in matters of the public, i.e. politics and the general coordination of the economy. Trust as well as distrust in general occurs with "the lower classes and their outlooks [*Gesinnungen*]." In short, trust and distrust are names for relations between the organization of a collective task and its concept that find their objective realization within the sphere of economy.

Peasantry is identified as the estate or as the "class of immediate trust and crude concrete labor"[v]: a class not only defined but also fully absorbed in and thereby determined by its concrete labor-form. The outlook of the peasantry endorses its type of labor. Its concept falls in line with its task. Peasantry, for the Jena Hegel, has no questions or doubts about its task. The peasants are marked by an "non-in-trust"; a trust that is not directed at an individual other, but trust in a pre- or unindividualized other: the trust in "the earth." The content of this trusting relationship is that the earth will provide for the peasant if the latter works adequately in cultivating the former.

The practice of peasantry, therefore, essentially relies on trust. It is a relation of trust because the peasant must believe that "he tills the soil, sows, but it is God who makes things grow." The peasant trusts in a "subterranean" activity.[vi] in an automatism beyond its own control, in an order that is natural and immediately given. Practice here is ultimately the practice of nature and of the earth. The practice of peasantry thus relies on trusting that nature does a good job. Because, fundamentally, the outcome of all (practical) work is God's or (mother) nature's work. The peasants are its helping cultivators. All the labor of the peasantry, therefore, never really gets any work done; it never builds an oeuvre of its own. Ever-lasting work never produces lasting work, as everything is nature's doing. This natural relation even determines peasantry's attitude to other, external and non-natural demands placed on it, say, taxes and the like. They appear to the peasant as if they were natural demands (as in "the rich also just want to live") which one cannot but trust. The peasants cannot but trust, and trust applies to their understanding of the very form of these demands, even though one might be as dissatisfied with what they demand, as one would be with a bad season. Nature is the authority that one trusts, and all authority is ultimately natural for the peasant.

This outlook changes in the estate or the "class of business and law [*Recht*]"[viii] the estate of the bourgeoisie, of the *Bürger*. [ix] It leaves behind the conceptual involvement with and practical inscription into nature. The latter now merely provides material for different types of formative activities. The bourgeois entire relation to the earth implies that "the natural... has died; it is considered only in its capacity for use and work"[x] – and that means that here nature is no longer divine invisible activity encompassing everything. God is no longer (natural), and, in this sense, the bourgeoisie assumes the full right to replace him. It produces and modifies what it finds as it sees fit and capable.

Nature and God have died, and the bourgeoisie thrives on both corpses. We leave the sphere of trust in the subterranean workings of the (big) Other and individualize and particularize our trust accordingly. The bourgeoisie does not have any trust issues. Because it has itself (to trust in). The death of God is the birth of the bourgeoisie, of a class which lives to trust in itself. It trusts in the right that it accredits to itself as the heir of God. The businessmen and the lawyers of the world-trust unite through this trust in themselves. But this attitude is also mediated through an other, but an other who is not really other: through the legal order that the bourgeoisie created and that accords it the right to trust only in itself. A bourgeois subject thereby knows himself "as proprietor – and not only because he possesses property, but, because it is his right to do so": in "enjoy[ing]... himself, his worth and uprightness"[xi]; the businesswoman and lawyer enjoys what she created, her own work and oeuvre. For this creation, the bourgeoisie essentially and only relies on itself and on a legal order, which it considers to be the result of its own making. It is like a legal(ized) self-empowerment and self-constitution. Every businessman and businesswoman, in this sense, are almost self-made. Because business is almost self-made. Almost, because it still needs business material, i.e., nature's leftovers, its dead body. It is the legal sphere that allows one to administer the distribution of this body that essentially empowers the bourgeoisie. Right is the name of the non-natural and abstract medium created by spirit as a condition of possibility for the ongoing existence of bourgeois business.

Enjoyment in this estate centers on "his self-image [*die Einbildung von sich selbst*]"[xii], because the bourgeoisie relies on the right to only mind its own business that it, itself, created in its own image. Business enjoyment is narcissistically jubilatory, since the bourgeois businessman is his own (imaginary) making out of the pieces of nature's fragmented body. To pun on Lacan, the bourgeoisie is the mirror estate. In minding one's own business, in enjoying oneself as a busy-man or a busy-woman, one actualizes trust in the very concept of oneself (expressed in the form of right) which justifies this very practice of self-enjoyment. Trust is thus individualized. It is the trust of and individual in – almost – nothing but the individual. The individual and its right (to nature). This trust-worthy outlook of lawful bourgeois existence produces a new way of seeing the world, wherein "possessing and counting-for-something become synonymous [*Gelten und Haben wird gleichbedeutend*]." [xiii] To count for something, to be counted (in) and thus to be (in) at all, requires one to have something. [xiv] A transformation has taken place. It is, therefore, not really the case that a particular individual, not even a particular estate counts for something. What ultimately only counts is "the reality of the having [*Habe*]"[xv]

Having determines being. This axiom is what manifests in another estate, "the mercantile class." [xvi] The merchant works, if neither by relying on a living natural production nor on a cultural (trans)formations of dead natural material. The merchant's labor "is pure exchange" and Hegel specifies that "exchange is movement, which is spiritual, the medium that is freed of uses and needs." [xvii] There are the peasants, the businesspeople, and then there are the exchangers. They (ex-)change everything. They are purists because they do not exchange for any other reason than to exchange. They exchange to exchange more. Exchange is, thus, essential surplus-exchange. But exchanging for exchanging's sake relies on organizing a separation between different poles of the exchange. Otherwise, there would be no exchange. Everything must be divided and separated from itself. Which is why we encounter here the division into the "particular, trade goods, and the abstract, money – a great invention."

The world of exchange is a world that separates (itself); a world that exchanges, fundamentally, the particular for the abstract because this is what exchange is. This is enabled by the great invention of money. There is now a division between particular goods and what they are in the abstract, what they are in terms of money (and, thus, value). Hegel adds to this in the margin of the page that with money "all needs are comprehended [*zusammengefaßt*] in this one." [xviii] All is united in that which separates. Money master-signifies every-thing. Therein they count only as long as they have a "meaning" [xix], a *Bedeutung* – whereby Hegel refers to the old meaning of meaning, of *Bedeutung*; that is, having a specific value – and they have a meaning as long as they are exchanged and exchangeable. Surplus-exchange creates a world of abstraction, whose medium is money that is independent from all material qualities of the thingly sphere. Now, we encounter a world wherein an abstract spirit moves restlessly from one transaction to the next.

In the mercantile universe and world(-view) every-thing is "not something to be enjoyed in itself", but "has become merely represented." [xx] Enjoyment here lies in the sphere of representation, i.e., in the sphere that enables exchange, namely money. Money enjoyment is thus specific to the mercantile world. No-thing and no-one count on their own terms, as in the world images of the prior estates. Only counting – in the abstract medium of (ac)counting – counts. There is thus not simply a gap between a thing and its representation. The reality of a thing, what a thing *is*, rather becomes identical to its representation. The representation brings forth the essence of the thing. A thing is its meaning, its value; any-thing, any-one is nothing but what it is counted to be. Representation forms the world in its own spirit. The mercantile world introduces thereby a profound transformation into the previous (onto-)logical order (first, there are natural things; then, one starts forming them). When it comes to abstract representation, it posits itself as always have been logically prior to everything else. Money does not only rule, but will have created the history of the world (anew). To be clear, Hegel does not insinuate that money would make no reference to things anymore. Rather, money transforms things. The mercantile representation(al creation) of the world brings to the fore what neither nature nor artifice were able to, simply because this world exists because of representation alone. The money representation expresses and, at the same time, creates the true inner kernel of any-thing it touches. It is in this sense that Hegel can remark that "the object... counts only according to the meaning", any particular thing "is simply something inner."

This very interiority is created by money.[xxi] The abstract representational world of mercantile abstract money-gaze creates its very own reality effect. Spirit in the mercantile estate speaks, thinks and creates in money-language, a language, to pun on Benjamin, of pure exchangeability. It produces an effect of realness through the very abstraction from reality, feeding back into it. Money implies such an effective real abstraction that, in the same stroke of producing its own validity, it transforms the entirety of reality.

This transformation implies that now "a person is as real as the money he has" [xxii] and thereby "this value is hard cash [*klingende Münze*]." [xxiii] Reality becomes the reality of value. But here Hegel crucially adds: "money, which has the meaning of all needs, is itself merely an immediate thing." [xxiv] Money is the one thing that appears to be immediately different from all other things, because it appears to be the one thing which is just a(n immediate) thing. It is the material bearer of the very operativity of the abstract value expression of every-thing. Money itself is thereby the immediate reminder of the very reality it transformed. It is the transformation of everything and the return of the transformed. Money is creation through abstraction that is embodied as a concrete thing. [xxv] Spirit is a bone; money is hard cash. This is what creates the specific outlook of the mercantile estate. It manifests as a separation in the form of the estate's practice and its concept as well as between the twot.

The mercantile outlook is "that harshness of spirit, wherein the particular no longer counts" and which follows only one principle: "exchange [*Wechsel*]" must be honored, no matter what goes down [*zugrunde geht*]." [xxvi] Here, the specific enjoyment is the enjoyment of the deal. Its imperative is: do not give up on your desire to make a deal. The mercantile estate is the estate of the dealer. Its outlook only cherishes the art of the deal. It relies on a permanently possible economic suspension of the ethical, in a riff on Žižek, that manifests in "complete mercilessness. Factories, manufacturing, base their subsistence on the misery of one class." [xxvii] The suspension of all norms other than that of the deal turns the dealer into a warily mistrustful individual. Because only an accomplished deal will prove that the deal was a good deal. There is no value, nothing behind or beyond it. Without moving from one pole of exchange to the other, repeatedly, there is no value. Thus, there can be no trust in anything but the effective creation of value, which is never guaranteed, except by the making of deals. Dealers do not trust anything—neither any general vision of dealing (with) things nor themselves nor any other dealer. One only makes a good deal if one mistrusts all deals. This is an effect of money that lifts all curtains, behind which we presumed the existence of something that we can trust. It shows that there is nothing behind these curtains, apart from what we exchange for that nothing. This is the deal.

We move from trust in the subterranean working of an unindividualized ordering Other through trust in the self-empowering formative activity of the divine bourgeois producer to the distrust at work in the mercantile dealer whose practice as such its outlook relies on separation, as he can trust no deal unless it is made. After each deal comes the next, which therefore makes trust, even in the (done) deal, impossible. This is money(-)thinking, the medium of mistrust. In money, "spirit, in its abstraction, has thus become an object for itself – as the *selfless* inner." [xxviii] Spirit generated money; it is its own deed embodied in a thing. Its own act of creating a world is stuck in the endless repetition of the distrusting movement specific to money, stuck in creation, simply because the one thing that escapes this movement constantly is money itself. Money tries to create more (than) money out of money and never generates anything (but money).

Money is thus the one thing that, from within this outlook, one can trust, but really shouldn't. It embodies the contradiction of a thing that is not a thing, but a movement. When describing the stuck movement of money, Hegel almost identifies this movement – or might we risk to say capital? – with the movement of spirit. Through money we see that any-thing, even spirit, is internally selfless. There is interiority, but it is the place of a less-ness, of a lack. "[T]hat dead thing, money" [xxx] creates a "life of the dead moving within itself [*ein sich in sich bewegendes Leben des Toten*]." [xxxi] Everything seems to move, but nothing ever changes. There seems to be life, but this is just a semblance created by the art of the deal. Everything seems to move in constant stagnation.

But the movement of money is not identical to spirit for Hegel. Since spirit cannot but move from the distrust that is dealing or making a deal to an absolute distrust. We cannot but start distrusting distrust itself. If everything in the mercantile universe has and must have a meaning, spirit breaks with the hermeneutic of value-dealing and starts to distrust the very coordinates of the economy of mistrust. Spirit starts to distrust absolutely, by distrusting the distrust created by the value-system of the world of dealers. Absolute distrust describes the point where we start having trust in something that does not appear to have a meaning or value. In something that is not exchangeable, not part of the deal. Absolute distrust is, therefore, trust in something non-reducible to the mercantile world, to nature or to us. It is the truest, in something without a meaning. Truth might be one name for it. One should risk trusting Hegel here. Since, from here, he moves on to speak about the universal class, as if absolute distrust cannot but lead us to another form of trust in politics.

- Notes:**
- [i] *Hegel and Human Spirit, A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6) with commentary*, transl. and ed. by Leo Rauch (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1983), p. 162.
- [ii] Ibid., p. 163. Translation modified, F.R.
- [iii] Ibid.
- [iv] Ibid., p. 167.
- [v] Ibid.
- [vi] Ibid.
- [vii] Ibid., p. 163f.
- [viii] Ibid., p. 165.
- [ix] The edition does not translate this concept, which can mean citizen or bourgeois.
- [x] Ibid.
- [xi] Ibid.
- [xii] Ibid.
- [xiii] Ibid.
- [xiv] Hegel will later formulate this principle of the bourgeois form of law by indicating that "it is a duty to possess things as property, i.e., to be a person", i.e. to have an existence in the sphere of right. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2010), p. 218.
- [xv] *Hegel and Human Spirit*, p. 166. The translation of "Habe" as possession is difficult, as possession is "Besitz" in German and Hegel here indicates that the having alone becomes constitutive. I therefore modified the translation, F.R.
- [xvi] Ibid.
- [xvii] Ibid.
- [xviii] *Hegel and Human Spirit*, p. 166. Translation slightly modified, F.R.
- [xix] Ibid.
- [xx] Ibid.
- [xxi] One can here risk the thesis that this is what happens in the aftermath of the Reformation (with Calvinism), when something starts to get counted, as Lacan remarks somewhere.
- [xxii] Ibid.
- [xxiii] Ibid.



Frank Ruda

Frank Ruda is a senior lecturer in philosophy at the University of Dundee, UK and Professor at the European Graduate School. His most recent publications include *Reading Hegel* (with Slavoj Žižek and Agon Hamza, Polity to appear in 2021), *The Dash – the Other*

ARCHIVES

- June 2021
- May 2021
- April 2021
- March 2021
- February 2021
- January 2021
- December 2020
- November 2020
- October 2020
- September 2020
- August 2020
- July 2020
- June 2020
- May 2020
- April 2020
- March 2020
- February 2020
- January 2020
- December 2019
- November 2019
- October 2019
- September 2019
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